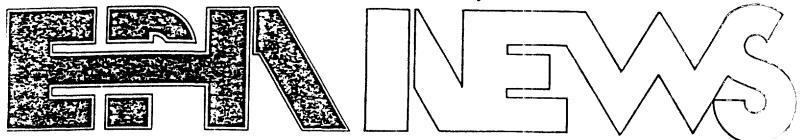
Illingis Environmenta Protection Agency



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For Immediate Release

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, SEPTEMBER 24, 1980

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's involvement in Cahokia's Burning Ditch (Dead Creek) was slow in developing. The Agency received initial reports from area residents in May of periodic smoldering of materials in the ditch between Queeny Avenue and Judith Lane. At that time the incident did not appear to be of a serious nature, and the Agency assigned it a low priority.

That all changed on August 27 when it was learned that Peter Laumann's dog rolled in the ditch and died of apparent chemical burns. Preliminary samples taken in the ditch revealed hazardous levels of phosphorous, heavy metals and PCB's along the half-mile of ditch between the two streets.

Subsequent soil samples taken on September 16 and 17 of soil in the ditch substantiated earlier results, (see attached table). At that time water samples were taken from three private wells plus a pond adjacent and connected to the ditch.

Samples from the wells were analyzed and showed normal levels of metals.

Analysis of the same wells for organic chemicals were negative for two but the well at 101 Walnut Street adjacent to the pond showed low levels of chlordane, PCB's and alkylbenzenes.

Analysis of the pond water showed normal levels of metals with low levels of PCB's and aliphatic hydrocarbons which are petroleum products such as motor oil.

Metro-East (East St. Louis) Journal, remembered stories of nearby residents who claimed to have gotten side from odors walling acorss the fields surrounding the landfill.

such registration were no leads by the Illinois to Public Health and are edby EPA.

Tahokia firefighters recall blazes near the area in the early 1900s, that sometimes it department to be called to

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The attorney general's office has "a suspect" in the Dead Creek case, but as yet has not begun an inv stigation of the source of material in the nearby landfill, she said.

"We're talking about a time when people buried the stuff and it thought it would all go away." Mrs. Carr said adding that industries that generated the waste products usually are sued if the dumper cannot be founk or is unable to pay.

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EPA SCIENTISTS will release results of an analysis of water samples taken from private wells in the Cahokia and of Dead Creek at a pews conference Wednesday.

micals from a landfill gground for industrial t than 40 years may und water, The Globe-

investigating a Saup believe toxic chemic used as a dumping g wastes for more ti

Agency, confirmed his agency is holding the reports that the late Lan Sauget, the first mayor of the town that bears his name, operated as immense is ndilli southeast of Dead Creek, which is a smoldering, glowing ditch polluted with , cancer-causing chemicals and could metals. "There's a better than \$9.50 chance emergiting's there," Maury told The

ete Lauman walks along the smoldering earth.

The dirt glows in 'dead creek'

Continued from Page 1A May when he received a call from Pete Lauman.

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dump south from what is Hall, and on Creek itself.
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Sauget. Sauget. mayor of reached

Lauman and his wife had been living in their new home at 105 Judith Lane only a few weeks when they found their prize show dog dead one morning, his skin eaten away by a mysterious substance he had rolled in the night before.

"THE BIG MALE and the pup were chasing each other in the back yard and he apparently rolled in the dirt in the ditch," Lauman said. "He came in covered from head to toe with some of the funniest substance I'd ever see

"We washed him off, but the next morning I found him dead by a tree in the back yard. His skin had deteriorated to the bare bone tissue and when I opened his mouth, it was all white and crumbly."

Lauman investigated the ditch and found the soil smoldering and hot to the touch. He said he later developed the same blood-red rings on his finger tips he had found on his dog after it had run in

"IF YOU TAKE some healthy dirt and throw it in, it melts," Lauman said. "I've had the fire densitiment out here to hose it down so often, they're getting tired of it. But, as soon as they start rolling up the hoses, the ditch is dry and smoldering again."

Lauman said he gets headaches frequently if he sits in his yard for a long time. A friend who visited him one day developed a case of swollen glands, he said.

"It gets so bad that you gag." Lauman said. "You have to keep the windows closed and the air Officials at Monsanto Co., a mile north of Lauman's property, deny they have been involved in any hazardous dumping.

"MONSANTO sent two inspectors to the scene when it first heard of it and could not establish a connection between the smoking ground and the plant," a spokesman for Monsanto in St. Louis said. "We handle all our materials in a very proper and legal manner."

Officials at Cerro Copper Co. and Edwin Cooper Inc., also opstream from the Laumans, were unavailable for comment.

"Whatever is there has been there for a number of years and conditions occurred that just made vhat happens happen," Mahlandt of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency office in Collingville

AMBER AND green dirt samples collected from the ditch do not burn unassisted in the laboratory, prompting agency officials to assume they are lealing with a chemical compound that has built up through the years

"We've never seen anything like it," Kelty said. "It won't respond to our analysis to our analysis techniques.

Meanwhile, youngsters continue to ride their bicycles down the slopes of the ditch and are often chased out by Lauman, who says be will "stay put" until the mystery is solved.

"I love this house and I really hate to give it up," Lauman said.
"I may have to sell and take a killing on it. But if I can pinpoint who's responsible, there's going to

By PATRICIA SZYMCZAK Globe-Democrat Staff Writer

Cahokia residents call it "dead

The ditch is much of the heavily industrialized sections of Sauget, and was reportedly used in the past for dumping chemical wastes.

The pust is apparently coming back to haunt neighburs of "dead

It's been five munths since chemists from the Illinois. Environmental Protection Agency. in Springfield first began analyzing samples of diri taken from the ditch that witnesses say glows at night with a purple-blue

AGENCY CHEMIST James Kelty plans to inspect the phenomenon next week. He said officials have yet to determine the chemical nature of the dirt.

"We're puzzled," Kelty said. "We know it reacts with air, but we don't know what it is. We don't if it's toxic and, quite frankly, we're hoping it just goes away.

Tonie Townsend, public health officer in Cahokia, sald he was first made aware of the problem in

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